United Nations

Press Release

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/924
3 July 1991

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General expresses hope that further bloodshed is avoided and negotiated solution is found to Yugoslavia's present problems.

- Secretary-General opens summer session of Economic and Social Council in Geneva.

- Secretary-General calls for immediate action to save lives in the Horn of Africa; announces that Unit for Special Emergency Programmes in the United Nations Department for Special Political Questions will be reinforced to coordinate relief efforts.

- Secretary-General's Executive Delegate to go to Howr Al-Hammar in southern Iraq during visit of high-level mission to assess humanitarian needs of Iraqi civilian population.

- United Nations official informs correspondents that Israeli hostage held in Kashmir has been released and handed over to Israeli Government representative.

* * *

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar today expressed hope that a solution could be found to Yugoslavia's present problems.

In a statement issued at the United Nations Office at Geneva, he said he had discussed the situation with all his contacts in London and Bonn over the past few days. He expressed the hope that regional efforts deployed in the framework of the European Community and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) would succeed so that further bloodshed could be avoided and a negotiated solution could be found to the present problems in Yugoslavia.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

* * *

The Secretary-General was in Geneva for the start of the summer session of the Economic and Social Council. In his opening statement, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said the United Nations must be given the means to carry out the increasing tasks assigned to it. He warned of an impending human tragedy of catastrophic proportions in Africa. The Secretary-General called for the convening of an international conference on development finance, and he urged major trading nations to give more serious consideration to the concerns of developing countries in the Uruguay Round of negotiations on trade liberalization.

During the next three weeks, the 54-member Council will examine the impact of the changes in East-West relations on the world economy, the oil market in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, and new criteria for defining what constitutes a "least developed country". The Council will be asked to approve and transmit to the General Assembly the inclusion of six new countries on the list of those designated as least developed -- Cambodia, Ghana, Madagascar, the Solomon Islands, Zaire and Zambia.

The Council will devote tomorrow and Friday, 4 and 5 July, to a special high-level ministerial meeting to discuss the impact of the recent evolution in East-West relations on the growth of the world economy, on the economic growth and development of developing countries, and on international cooperation.

The session, which is expected to conclude on Friday, 26 July, will be the last under the present structure of the Council.

* * *

At a meeting in Geneva today on the emergency situation in the Horn of Africa, at which all heads of humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system were represented, the Secretary-General said the needs outlined in a report prepared by James Ingram, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), should be regarded as "a call for action -- action now".

The report was the result of a mission which Mr. Ingram took recently at the request of the Secretary-General, to assess the immediate requirements for humanitarian assistance in the Horn of Africa and to accelerate its mobilization and distribution.

In a statement to the inter-agency meeting, the Secretary-General noted that in May of this year he had appealed for additional resources to respond to the plight of almost 30 million of Africans facing the threat of starvation. He said the overall situation had taken on even greater urgency now with the recent developments in Ethiopia. The Secretary-General said he was greatly encouraged by the positive assurances of full cooperation by the Governments of the affected countries; it was now up to the international community to assist them in their courageous efforts.

He said he was convinced that the United Nations must play a leading role in the effort, and he announced the reinforcement of the Unit for Special Emergency Programmes in the Department for Special Political Questions,Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, headed by Under-Secretary-General James Jonah. Special attention would be paid by the Unit to the collection and dissemination of up-to-date information on needs and responses for the Horn. Arrangements would also be made for the coordination of resources mobilization, regular liaison with donor Governments and affected Governments, regular liaison with non-governmental organizations, and also for appropriate public information activities.

* * *

It was announced today that the Executive Delegate of the Secretary-General, Sadruddin Aga Khan, had reported to the Secretary-General in Geneva today on the conclusion of a special fact-finding mission sent to southern Iraq last week to look into the situation of displaced groups in the marshlands region. A United Nations official said that in the light of the findings of the mission, and of its possible serious humanitarian consequences for the populations concerned, it was decided that the Executive Delegate should, as a matter of urgency, request that arrangements be made for him to visit the area of Howr Al-Hammar during the high-level mission which he was to lead to Iraq next week, in order to assess the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi civilian population. The area in question was identified by the special mission as a particularly high-risk one in terms of human suffering for the displaced persons.

In a separate development, the United Nations official announced that, in Geneva tomorrow morning, the Secretary-General would receive the three members of the high-level mission he sent to Baghdad at the weekend. The mission was dispatched to Iraq at the request of the Security Council to discuss immediate access to all nuclear-weapon sites and security for the inspection team.

* * *

A United Nations spokeswoman told correspondents today that Yair Yitzaki, the Israeli hostage being held in Kashmir, had been released and handed over to an Israeli Government representative. The spokeswoman said that Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding had received a telephone call this morning from the officer-in-charge of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) who reported that the hostage had just been brought to the UNMOGIP compound by a group of journalists. He was subsequently collected from the compound by a local representative of the Israeli Government.

* *** *